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# The Church Faces the World

A Message to American Christians from

**DR. E. STANLEY JONES**

Missionary and Author  
Leader of The Preaching Mission

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# Dr. Jones' Message

The Christian Church must set its own house in order and get ready for the greatest crisis in its history. First, it must lay aside its tentative attitudes, its defeatist mentality, and assume a new moral and spiritual aggressiveness. An editorial in a prominent paper said, "The response to the National Preaching Mission shows one thing plainly, that Christianity must assume a new aggressiveness, must cease its pink-tea party attitudes and with moral boldness undertake to show the way out."

## *The Kingdom of God on Earth*

But organized Christianity will never get that courage unless it comes out of deep convictions. And those deep convictions will never come unless we found afresh the whole of our social and economic and personal attitudes in the very nature of the Christian God. We must rediscover and re-apply Christ's original message, the Kingdom of God on earth, a new Order standing at the door of this lower order ready to replace it with God's way of life. This alien, unworkable lower order founded on greed, exploitation, unbrotherliness, is breaking down through its own tensions and contradictions and our only hope is God's way, the Kingdom of God on earth. This Kingdom, said Jesus, was built from the foundation of the world—built not merely from the foundation of the world in point of time, but built within the very structure of the universe in point of fact. To love your neighbor as you love yourself is not idealism, but stark realism. The fact is that the Christian way is the only way that will work. Everything else breaks itself upon the moral facts of the universe.

## *A Christian Social Order Is Imperative*

We must apply this message to the economic and social order. For the economic is the present tension point of our problems. But there are those who feel that religion must have nothing to do with this, must only have to do with the saving of the soul. I do believe in the saving of the soul, but while evil can be in the individual will it can also be in the collective will; there is such a thing as an evil system as well as an evil soul. Shall we rescue individual slaves and leave untouched the slave traffic? Shall we pick up individual drunkards and leave intact the liquor traffic? Shall we tend to the wounded in war and leave operative the war system? Shall we rescue the derelicts of a ruthlessly selfish order and give them doles and hand-outs or shall we build justice and the love of God into the total order. Obviously we must do both. It is not enough to say that if we change the individual wills we will thereby of necessity change the social order. The social order is not made up entirely of individual wills no living, but of inherited attitudes that have come down from generation to generation and have become embodied in customs, laws, ins

tutions, and these exist in large measure independently of the individual wills now living. Change those individual wills and you will not of necessity change the social order unless you organize those individual wills into collective action on a wide-scale frontal attack upon those corporate evils.

### *Our Country—Communist, Fascist or Christian?*

Moreover, if we abdicate the control of social and economic life, then other forces will take it over, and, there are two definite forces bidding for the control of it right now, Communism and Fascism. You must make up your minds, and make them up quickly, whether you want this country and the world to go Communist or Fascist or Christian. All three are ways of life, demanding a total allegiance in the total life, and a choice must be made. I make mine—I want my country to go—not Communist or Fascist, but Christian. But Christianity does not mean things as they are. If Abraham Lincoln were here now I think he would change his statement that this country cannot exist half-slave and half-free, and would say with infinite sadness, "This country cannot exist half-stuffed and half-starved."

The Christian movement must give itself to the winning of the leaders of Industry and Labor. We must Christianize the foundations upon which their relationships exist. If we do, then the relationships must be cooperative instead of competitive, for that fits the Christian ethic.

### *Make Haste! We May Be Too Late*

But we have no time to spare. This breathing-space is ours; tomorrow may belong to Communism or Fascism. The attempt will be made, is being made, to ally Christianity and Fascism to fight Communism. My most solemn warning as I leave these shores is this: If religion accepts an alliance with Fascism in any of its forms it is damned—it writes its own epitaph. I therefore warn the Christians of America against that alliance. Stand in your own right, announce your own program, and give your own answers. The Christian Church must launch a movement to win industry, and must do it now.

It must also win the students. The students have changed. Never have they been more open and responsive than now to a message that is sincere, real and adequate. We must launch a nation-wide movement to win the high schools, the colleges, the university students, to the Christian way. And this means the professors as well. Education must be evangelized.

### *Christianize Race Relations*

I also urge upon you to Christianize our race relations. The Negro up to this time has been the most patient man on earth. But he is being increasingly embittered and we must head this off by making our racial contacts Christian. Color bars still exist in some Christian churches. These churches have been invaded and conquered by the surrounding culture. We must create our own culture—a Christian culture. As a step toward this, I suggest that each white church



invite at least one person of the colored race to become an honor member of that church and that each colored church invite at least one person of the white race to become a member. This would not solve our problems, but it would proclaim that Christianity is color-blind and class-blind.

### *Changed Lives Necessary*

I must urge upon you something that is implicit in everything else that I say, namely, the necessity of offering to the individual the possibility of a changed life—a life fundamentally redirected and regenerated. If we lose the power to produce the miracle of the changed life, we lose our right to be called Christian. The Cross offers forgiveness, release and victory to sinful men.

### *Unite Our Churches—In Unity Is Strength*

But I do not see how the Christian Church can do the things I have suggested unless we get together. Our denominationalism simply cannot do the task. A divided Church in a divided world has little moral authority. The next great step within Christendom is for the churches to unite. But if we wait till we all agree on church government and church polity we will wait till doomsday. Let us come together on the same basis as these United States have come together—unity comprehending difference. I suggest that we drop our denominational labels as separate churches and have one church—"The Church of Christ in America"—and under this central unity we have branches—branches of the one Church—"The Baptist Branch of the Church of Christ in America," "The Episcopal Branch," and so on, leaving the possibility of local self-government in the branches. We would be bound together in the "General Assembly of the Church of Christ in America." Here the united voice of the Church would speak to the nation and to the world the great Christian convictions. In this plan we would not be called on to give anything fundamentally good in any branch, but each could give good to the rest. Our basis would then be cooperative instead of competitive, as now. Christians of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose except your dividing walls.

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### *Suggested Questions for Group Study*

1. Can the Christian Gospel be stated without reference to social situations?
2. At what points does the present economic order appear to be unchristian? What first step may be taken toward a more Christian economic order?
3. Is there any relationship between the recent appearance of dictatorships in government and Christianity as we have known it?
4. Whites now accept Negro "labor," "service," and "amusement." What further relations between the races would Christianity open up?
5. Is permanent world peace possible without economic justice between the nations?
6. Is Jones' proposal for a Church of Christ in America desirable and practical?

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